

REMARKS

In the Office Action dated January 19, 2005, Claims 1-3, 7-9, 13-15, 30, 35 and 40 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,667,992, issued to Yanagawa. Claims 4-6, 10-12, 16-29, 31-34, 36-39 and 41-44 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yanagawa in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,496,862, issued to Akatsu et al. Applicants note the Office Action initially referred to Freed (US 6,269,473). This reference appears to be in error, as the remaining discussion in the Office Action never mentions Freed, nor is Freed applicable to the claims. Applicants respond herewith based on the Office Action's discussion of Yanagawa and Akatsu.

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection of Claims 1-44 as set forth in the Office Action. Without admitting the propriety of the rejections, Claims 18, 22, 26, 30-31, 35-36, 40 and 42 have been amended for purposes of clarification and to correct minor typographical errors. Applicants respectfully submit that Yanagawa and Akatsu, either alone or in combination, fail to teach or suggest the claimed invention as recited in Claims 1-44. Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.111, and for the reasons set forth below, applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of this application.

Prior to discussing in detail the reasons why applicants believe that Claims 1-44 are allowable, brief descriptions of embodiments described in the present application are provided. This brief discussion of embodiments is not provided to define the scope of any of the claims, nor is it exhaustive in describing all the patentable features of the invention. Rather, this brief discussion is provided to help the United States Patent and Trademark Office better appreciate aspects of the invention discussed thereafter.

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Brief Discussion of Embodiments

The present application describes a user model for multimedia communication network systems, including but not limited to interactive television systems. In one aspect, the user model organizes access devices into households. A household, for example, may have various access devices such as television set top boxes (STBs), personal computers (PCs), personal digital assistants (PDAs), cell phones, etc. The access devices are used for communication and consumption of media. In the user model of the present invention, the household has a household "object" associated therewith. Each access device in the household has a corresponding access device "object" associated therewith. The access device objects are logical extensions of each other in the household object. For simplicity of discussion herein, a household object may otherwise be referred to as a "household" and an access device object may otherwise be referred to as an "access device."

In addition, each household can have multiple user objects. For example, consider a household in which each of the parents and children of a family have a corresponding user object in the household. Attributes and data associated with each user object may be used to define different access privileges possessed by each user in the household. A user object for a child may include a channel list that permits the child to access only those channels deemed appropriate by the child's parents. A user object for a parent may grant the privilege of purchasing pay per view programming that otherwise is withheld from a child. Different media access privileges for different users can be controlled by the different user objects in the household.

Each user object in a household has its own independent configuration of attributes and data. This aspect of the present invention allows a user to create or reconfigure a user object by logging on to an authorized user object at any one of the access devices of the household. The

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other access devices (if any) in the household automatically receive the user object information of a new or reconfigured user object without any further action by the user. Thus, this aspect advantageously allows a single operation to configure and/or reconfigure all of the access devices in a household with the user object information of a new or revised user object.

In another aspect, when a user adds a new access device to the household, the new access device automatically receives the user object information of user objects already existing in the household, without any further action by the user. In one embodiment, this automatic exchange of user object information is coordinated by a server that stores the configuration information of each household and its associated user objects. This server, for example, can be operated by a multiple service operator (MSO) or service provider. Alternatively, the server may be at a broadcast center for a satellite broadcast system.

In another aspect, the information of a user object may be updated using a revision information file. An access device sends updated user object information to a server when a user changes the user object information of a user object via that access device. In one embodiment, the server receives the updated user object information and stores the updated information in a file corresponding to the user object. In addition, the server creates an update entry for the received update information, which is stored in a list. The update entry includes a ticket number and a bit vector, with the bit vector corresponding to the updated information being set. The ticket number is incremented for each new update entry. As noted at page 24, lines 2-5 of the present application, "[i]n one embodiment, the server increments the most recent ticket number the server has used and assigns this incremented ticket number to the received user object information. In this way, the server provides an identifier to each received set of user object information."

To update the user object information of a user object in a particular access device, the server receives the ticket number of the access device's current configuration for that user object. The server then determines an update vector for that access device as a function of the access device's bit vector, current ticket number, and more recent bit vectors from other access devices. In one embodiment, the server then provides the update vector to that access device. That access device can then request the updated user object information corresponding to each set bit in the update vector. This operation is performed for all of the access devices in the household on an ongoing basis.

Claims 1-17 Are Patentable Over the Cited Art

Turning now to the Office Action, applicants have carefully considered the Yanagawa reference and the discussion in the Office Action, and respectfully disagree with the claim rejections.

Claim 1 recites as follows:

1. A method of controlling access to content in a multimedia communication network system having a plurality of access devices, the method comprising:

receiving configuration information related to a user object from a user via an access device of the plurality of access devices, the configuration information defining multimedia content that can be accessed by instantiating the user object in an access device; and

providing the received configuration information to another access device of the plurality of access devices.

In support of the rejection of Claim 1, the Examiner argues "Yanagawa disclose controller signal process receiving configured data equipment structure information from the

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1394 bus, regarding the devices on the transmission line, via controller and device while their function can be commanded by user," citing Yanagawa, col. 17, lines 1-60 and col. 18, lines 8-55. The Examiner further argues "Yanagawa disclose Data process receive from a transmitter / receiver the information about the devices on the transmission line," citing Yanagawa col. 18, lines 40-45 and col. 20, lines 30-67. (Office Action, pages 3-4).

After carefully reviewing the cited passages and indeed the entire disclosure of Yanagawa, applicants find nothing that discloses the claimed invention. Yanagawa does not teach anything about "receiving configuration information related to a user object from a user via an access device" wherein "the configuration information defin[es] multimedia content that can be accessed by instantiating the user object in an access device." While the Examiner alleges that Yanagawa discloses a controller receiving data equipment structure information, such disclosure is not relevant nor is it equivalent to the foregoing elements recited in Claim 1. Yanagawa is concerned with communicating data equipment structure information to a controller, which is entirely different than receiving configuration information related to a user object as set forth in Claim 1. Further, as expressly recited in Claim 1, "the configuration information defin[es] multimedia content that can be accessed by instantiating the user object in an access device," which is nowhere taught or described in Yanagawa. For these reasons, applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of Claim 1. Allowance of dependent Claim 2-6, which recite additional patentable subject matter therein, is also requested.

Claims 7-12 and 13-17, which recite claim elements similar to Claims 1-6, are patentable over Yanagawa for the same reasons expressed above. The Akatsu reference does not include any disclosure that overcomes the deficiency of disclosure in Yanagawa.

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Claims 18-29 Are Patentable Over the Cited Art

Claim 18, as amended above, recites as follows:

18. A method of providing configuration information related to a user object of a multimedia communication network system having a plurality of access devices, the configuration information including values for a plurality of configuration parameters, the method comprising:

receiving a portion of the configuration information related to a user object from a user via an access device of the plurality of access devices;

assigning a ticket number to the received portion of the configuration information;

storing the ticket number in a revision history; and

providing the ticket number to the access device.

In support of the rejection of Claim 18, the Examiner argues "Yanagawa disclose network control configuration information received via a controller of user devices," citing Yanagawa, col. 20, lines 1-67; "Yanagawa disclose device is identified with identifier which is stored in a function list," citing Yanagawa col. 19, lines 2-67; and "Yanagawa disclosed device supplied with identifier from function list," citing Yanagawa col. 19, lines 20-67. The Examiner further argues Akatsu teaches a revision history. (Office Action, pages 8-9).

After carefully reviewing Yanagawa, including the passages cited by the Examiner, applicants find nothing that discloses the invention as claimed. Yanagawa does not disclose "receiving a portion of the configuration information related to a user object" and "assigning a ticket number to the received portion" wherein "the ticket number [is stored] in a revision history" and "provid[ed]...to the access device." While the Examiner alleges that Yanagawa discloses a device identified with an identifier that is stored in a function list, such disclosure is

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not relevant nor is it equivalent to the elements of the invention claimed in Claim 18. Yanagawa's process of identifying a device with an identifier is entirely different than receiving a portion of configuration information related to a user object and assigning a ticket number to the received portion as recited in Claim 18. For these reasons, applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of Claim 18. Allowance of dependent Claim 19-21, which recite additional patentable subject matter therein, is also requested.

Claims 22-25 and 26-29, which recite claim elements similar to Claims 18-21, are patentable over Yanagawa for the same reasons expressed above. Applicants have further carefully considered the Akatsu reference and find nothing in Akatsu that cures the deficiency of disclosure in Yanagawa.

Claims 30-44 Are Patentable Over the Cited Art

Claim 30, as amended above, recites as follows:

30. A method of providing updated configuration information related to user object of a multimedia communication network system having a plurality of access devices, the configuration information including values for a plurality of configuration parameters, the system including a revision history configured to store identifiers and bit vectors associated with updates to the configuration information related to the user object, the method comprising:

receiving an identifier from an access device of the plurality of access devices;

determining an update vector as a function of the received identifier and any identifiers in the revision history that are more recent than the received identifier; and

providing the update vector to the access device.

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In support of the rejection of Claim 30, the Examiner argues "Yanagawa disclose device is identified with identifiers," citing Yanagawa, col. 19, lines 2-35, and "Yanagawa disclose a function list with a new device being identified with identifiers," citing Yanagawa col. 17, lines 1-45 and col. 19, lines 2-50. (Office Action, page 11).

Applicants have carefully reviewed the cited passages and again the entire disclosure of Yanagawa, and find nothing that discloses the claimed invention. Yanagawa in particular discloses nothing about "determining an update vector as a function of the received identifier and any identifiers in the revision history that are more recent than the received identifier" and "providing the update vector to the access device." While the Examiner alleges that Yanagawa discloses a device identified by an identifier and maintenance of a function list, such disclosure is not relevant nor is it an equivalent to the invention as claimed in Claim 1. The function list in Yanagawa is used to allow a controller to invoke commands that control a corresponding device and cause the device to undertake a specified action. This has no bearing on the claimed invention. For these reasons, applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of Claim 30, as well as dependent Claim 31-34 which recite additional patentable subject matter therein.

Claims 35-39 and 40-44, which recite claim elements similar to Claims 30-34, are patentable over Yanagawa for the same reasons expressed above. The Akatsu reference is also deficient and when considered with Yanagawa, the combination of references still does not disclose or suggest the claimed invention.

CONCLUSION

Applicants submit that all of the claims in the present application are patentably distinguished over the teaching of Yanagawa and Akatsu. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of the application to issue at an early date. If the Examiner has

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any remaining questions concerning this application, the Examiner is invited to contact applicants' undersigned attorney at the number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

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I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the U.S. Postal Service in a sealed envelope as first class mail with postage thereon fully prepaid and addressed to **Mail Stop Amendment**, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on the below date.

Date: June 20, 2005 Quinn Zett

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